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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 001400

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SUBJECT: COURTESY CALL ON MOD'S SHAYKH SABAH AL-NASSER AL  
SABAH

KUWAIT 00001400 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: CDA Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Summary. On September 6, Charg and Chief, OMC-K paid a courtesy call on Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense Under Secretary Shaykh Sabah Al-Nasser Al Sabah. The Under Secretary offered his thoughts on an ongoing investigation of aircraft engine sales to Iran, his dreams of upgrading the Kuwaiti military, and why some Muslims and Arabs hate the United States. End Summary.

Airplane engines to Iran  
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¶2. (C) According to a September 5 Kuwait Times article, the Kuwait Security Services arrested a Kuwaiti national for allegedly trying to sell aircraft engines to the Iranian Ministry of Defense, an act in violation of UN sanctions forbidding the sale of any military equipment to Iran. The individual reportedly bought the engines in 1992 from the Kuwait MOD and plans to sell them for KD 40,000 (approximately USD 150,000). U/S Sabah confirmed the report, and added that the MOD was launching an investigation into the matter.

Upgrade Kuwaiti military  
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¶3. (C) U/S Sabah told Charg that Kuwait needs to upgrade its military. Describing Israel as a model of how a relatively small, technically proficient military can survive and attain success in a hostile region, he said that Kuwait's 30,000-40,000 service members need to maximize their technological potential. He wants to see them "run the whole thing with a push of a button." He also proposed a joint venture with a Kuwaiti military academy and West Point to develop the premier academy for military officer training in the region.

Views on why a portion of Muslims/Arabs hate the U.S.  
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¶4. (C) According to U/S Sabah, the reason that a portion of Arabs and Muslims hate the U.S. is that the American response to 9/11 thwarted the plans of a small radical group to take over the region and establish an Islamic theocracy. He added that this group consists of influential Arabs and Islamists from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and even Kuwait organizing themselves to become the leaders of a unified Islamic power. As evidence of extremist interference in regional internal issues, he pointed to how Arabs are killing each other in every Arab country, and he lamented about how

little recognition the U.S. gets for its role in saving countless thousands of Muslims in Bosnia.

#### The cost of peace

15. (C) U/S Sabah said that Iran is determined to have nuclear power and that the region "will suffer for sure." He lamented how Arabs condemned the 1981 Israeli attack of the Iraqi Osirak nuclear facility, but forget what a tremendous threat Saddam would have been to the region, and notably Kuwait, had he obtained nuclear weapons. In terms of the concept of American hegemony, in contradiction to most accounts we receive in the region, he said that, "If American dominance creates peace in the world, we accept it." He also called for UN control of Jerusalem and said that Syrian dependence on financial aid from regional neighbors prevents its ever having peace with Israel.

#### For the Bio file:

16. (C) U/S Sabah is overtly pro-American and has remained grateful to the U.S. for liberating Kuwait. He told the Charg that he remained in Kuwait for the Iraqi invasion and the seven months of occupation that followed. Though he is an MOD Under Secretary, he has a diminished military role. When asked questions on military matters, he deferred to the 'other wing', i.e. the portion run by the Kuwait Armed Forces Chief of Staff. (Note: Post deems that U/S Sabah, who considers himself an architect and inventor, holds his senior position with the MOD due to nepotism, not professional qualifications. Despite his apparent lack of interest in military operational issues, he is an important contact due to his pro-U.S. views and influential family connections. End note.)

#### Bio Notes:

##### U/S Sabah

- graduated from Catholic University in WDC as an architect
- claims that he has 14 patents on inventions with the U.S. Patent Office
- is known as one of the few members of the Al Sabah (ruling family) who stayed in Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation

His brother, Shaykh Saud Al-Nasser Al Sabah, was the Kuwait Ambassador to the U.S. during the Iraqi occupation. He later became the Minster of Information and then Minister of Oil until February 2001. Another brother, Shaykh Talal Al-Nasser Al Sabah was convicted of smuggling/selling heroin and sentenced to death (pending appeal) in early 2007.

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MISENHEIMER